

Hopelines



A quarterly publication presenting news and stories of Living Hope Native Ministries, a partnership dedicated to serving the First Nations of Ontario.



Our Vision

That in every First Nations context the local church would reach its full potential—worshiping in full devotion, attracting the seekers mobilizing believers, restoring families, changing communities affecting the world.



Volume 24

December 2024

Issue 4

A Joy to Serve

2024 Ministry Report

Recently LHNM staff were asked the question, “What brought you the most joy in ministry in 2024?” Following are some of the answers that came back. May they encourage you to give God glory for what he’s doing across Ontario!



In Thunder Bay, Rodney Martin is the Director of Public Relations. He writes, “In the past year I have met so many wonderful people. I have been opened to a side of Christianity that I have never been exposed to before. A very loving community, driven people devoted to missions, and helping people. Just to be able to witness this has been a highlight of my year.”

Wendell and Lila Graber live in Sault Ste. Marie, and lead The Lighthouse. This year they share that, “Seeing specific answers to prayer and seeing how God is working in and through the church” is what brought them joy.

In the area around Morson, associates Rob and Joy Weaver and their family share Christ’s love with the community.

From Rob, “I was the main teacher on a canoe trip with 28 teenagers. My theme was “Living Sacrifice,” with 5 lessons from the book of Romans. I was encouraged by their receptiveness to the Word and their desire to grow in the Lord.”

Associates Rob and Sharlene Dilts live near Golden Lake, and their story of joy is as follows: “The River Drop-In has brought us the most joy in ministry recently. Though small in numbers, both in youth and volunteers, we have been blessed in being able to fellowship every Friday with people who share a commitment and heart to reconciliation and community. It has been a blessing to be praying regularly with others for our youth and community, and for each other.”

Pastor Sebai Yaman from Thunder Bay ministers to the New Hope Fellowship congregation. He told that “Wednesday evenings are still the ministry highlight of my weeks. There is something special about worshipping together with brothers and sisters who aren't coming out just as a habit, but with a genuine desire to foster

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

community. It brightens my day.”

Colleen Estes lives and works in the northern community of Pikangikum. She is involved in the school and with youth ministries. She writes, “Seeing the Lord work through some young adults in reaching out to others, having ministry help especially with the teaching, and seeing our youth worship Jesus at Warrior Leadership Summit.”

From Red Lake, Merle and Rita Nisly offer mentorship and encouragement to individuals and churches. Merle shares that he feels joy “When we are able to help people find their place in the church community, and keep growing in their relationship with God and with others; when teaching topics seem to meet the needs felt by individuals and groups to grow in knowledge and grace.”

Jamie and Rhonda Thornton are in Parry Sound. They felt joy in 2024 in the following ways: “To be able to reconnect with youth and young adults from our Bible camp days, and be part of their lives again after a number of years. Knowing that when they see us they immediately think of Bible Camp and the teachings about Jesus, and to be able to tell them that we still love them and are there for them no matter what they are going through in their lives, and most importantly that Jesus is right there with them every step of the way!”

Staff Care Directors Stuart and Delores Swartzentruber are based in Thunder Bay. Stuart writes, “I am so encouraged by Nick [and other Christian teachers] working together in Pikangikum. It brings me joy to see the commitment and energy young people bring. It was also very encouraging to see the Northern Lights Association of Churches Gathering so well attended, including young families.”

Executive Director, Andrew Lang lives with his family outside Thunder Bay. He shared about his joy in 2024, “I’ve been encouraged with seeing more First Nations believers step up and take increasing roles in First Nations ministry.”



Cell Phone Faith

I’ll be completely honest here: I’ve got a cell phone and even though I call people all the time and have spent so much time using it for all sorts of reasons, I’m not entirely sure how my voice and text messages can bounce all over the world and get to the right destination every time.

It would be logical to say that I’m foolish for putting my trust in something I don’t understand. I trust my phone will work because it rarely fails me, lots of other people use cell phones without issue, and there’s evidence of cell phone infrastructure everywhere we look (except on trips deep in the woods).

Even though I pray all the time I’m not sure exactly how it works, yet I can be confident that God hears what I’m asking for. I pray knowing that Jesus is in heaven advocating for my prayers to God, and that in some way he is providing and caring for all my needs in every way.

I’m excited to have this issue of Hopelines come out with such amazing encouragement on the ways God has been working through prayer in the last year amongst the communities we serve. I pray that you would be encouraged and inspired to pray big, knowing that God is listening and able to answer your prayers.



- Andrew Lang

Staff Updates

Welcome to our New Members



Nick Backlund is from Michigan, and served as a volunteer in Pikangikum for 6 months at the beginning of 2024. He is now returning to Pikangikum with a work permit!

He will be working in Christian Education in the school, as well as connecting with youth and local churches.

Nick is passionate about sharing the love of Jesus with those around him.

Ynze and Margaret Flietstra live in Thunder Bay, ON, along with their three children, Seth, Peyton and Sadie.

Before coming to Thunder Bay, Ynze served for nearly ten years as a pastor in Sudbury, ON. Over his time there, Ynze used adventure as one of his primary tools for leadership and discipleship development. The challenge of adventure -- the hard work and the unknown -- can serve as a great catalyst for discovering the calling God has placed on our lives.

Ynze is excited to bring his experience to Thunder Bay and the greater North as he joins the LHNM team as the Akwachink Coordinator, using adventure as the tool for leadership and spiritual development for the next generation of church leaders.



Alena Hunter is from Thunder Bay, and is a new member of the LHNM office team.

She will be working part time in the office, helping out with social media and other tasks.

In July, Alena traveled with a ministry team that visited First Nations communities and ministered to young people through sports and testimonies.

Farewells

After more than 40 years of involvement in ministry with LHNM, Ken and Sondra Funk are retired. They started out with their young family in Red Lake in 1980, and then moved to Thunder Bay to plant a church. That church grew into New Hope Fellowship, which is still active today. Ken and Sondra still provide mentorship to the leadership of New Hope, as well as ministering to people around them through their discipleship and caring.



Arthur Lyndaker has served with LHNM for almost 30 years. He and Iris came to Red Lake as newlyweds, and for many years they led the Akwachink program, were active in youth ministry, and served in the local church. They also lived in a northern community for 10 years, and formed many deep connections during that time. Since Iris's passing in 2023, Arthur has taken a leave of absence from LHNM, and is now following God's leading to move on to other ministry.

